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The Growth of Film Units in British Overseas Territories

by ROGER MANVELL AND WILLIAM SELLERS

With the collaboration of Dr Manvell, Director of the British Film Academy, we have published a series of articles on documentary films, paying special regard to their geographical value. This is, however, by no means the only point at which 'films of fact' touch the geographical field: another resides in the local production of an intensely, though not intentionally, self-revealing kind of film which has been widely stimulated by the creative efforts of Mr Sellers and his colleagues

A FILM can reveal the life of a country and its people either directly or indirectly. Many countries have an established production of documentary or other films which deliberately set out to project themselves (their "way of life") to the world abroad. But many films are made solely for internal use within a particular country or even within a particular region of a country; and these films can often be far more revealing to the outside observer than the more conventional self-portraits that are made for foreign consumption. We in Britain have made many such films by ourselves for ourselves; they have often been more acute, more accurate, more revealingly indigenous, than the pictures we have produced specially for export.

The British Colonial Film Unit was brought into existence by the Government in 1939, after experimental film work initiated by Mr William Sellers in Nigeria had proved its worth in teaching illiterate people some facts of health and hygiene. The Unit was formed to encourage the production in our Colonies of simple educational and instructional films, but in fact it also created a library of anthropological motion pictures which form a most valuable study of life in a number of the British dependencies. The Unit was disbanded in 1955 partly as a measure of economy and partly because, during the ten years following the war, the Unit had been successful in stimulating the local production of these simple kinds of film in some twenty-eight Colonial territories.

During the 1930s William Sellers, who was an official in the Nigerian Government service, learned by trial and error how to make films which would become an effective means of teaching matters connected mainly with public health to Nigerians who were largely illiterate and living in village communities. He found that his village audiences would only accept information which was first presented to them wholly in local terms: any new ideas must be brought home through something directly connected with their own daily experience. To an African who has never seen the sea, the picture of an ocean-going liner is without meaning—a moving design in black-and-white. To make the picture mean something to him (to use Mr Seller's own words) "we started by showing a few ducks in a stream, suggesting that they have given man the idea of using a canoe-paddle. This was followed by a visual explanation of small craft driven through the water by oars, sail, stern-wheeler and screw propellers. As the stream widened into a large river the boats became bigger and bigger, until eventually we reached the estuary and the sea, where the greatest ships were shown."

The films that are most effective grow, therefore, directly out of the audience's own experience, and they must employ very simple techniques of pictorial exposition or they will soon outstrip the comprehension of illiterate peoples or inadvertently misinform them. For example, an early film on malaria had a handsomely shot sequence showing a mosquito in magnified close-up, explaining how it brought the disease to man. But the African audience merely thanked its lucky stars that the local insects were so small in comparison with this foul monster, and therefore so comparatively harmless. The normal effective techniques of film structure, so rapidly assimilated by ourselves (the flash-backs, the close-ups, the quick cutting from shot to shot) are useless with these remote audiences who can only follow a film which moves slowly and deliberately.

Speaking to the Royal Society of Arts in 1953, Mr Sellers said: "If films for colonial people are to be successful they must be made in the local idiom and with a technique which follows closely on traditional story-telling lines. This requires an intimate knowledge of the people and their habits and customs, which few apart from the people themselves



All photographs, except two, from the authors

Wherever films are used to spread information and ideas it is important to train local men as film technicians. (Above) *Practical instruction at the British Colonial Film Unit's training school at Accra, Ghana.* (Below) *Trainees from Barbados and Jamaica at the West Indies Film Training School*





An ambition achieved by British Colonial Film Units : films of *the people* by *the people* for *the people.* (Above) *A scene during the shooting of* The Wives of Nendi, *made by the Central African Film Unit.* (Below) The Kinta Story, *made by the Malayan Film Unit, tells how Chinese miners overcame bandits*



possess. It soon became obvious that if successful films were to be made *for* the people and *with* the people they must be made *by* the people."

The result was the establishment of technical training schools in London, Africa, Cyprus and the West Indies. Between 1940 and 1955 over a hundred students from some thirty overseas territories were trained in film-making. Most of them were young and enthusiastic government officials, who returned to their own countries and applied their knowledge to local production to meet local educational needs.

Parallel with the production of these local and regional films went the development of their use. An organization of travelling cinema vans was established, and simple commentaries were prepared which could be rehearsed by local commentators (such as school-teachers) so that the audience were always spoken to in their local dialect. A sound-track recorded in some form of standard speech would obviously be quite useless on the touring vans. The following is an account written by Mr Sellers of his impressions during one of these film exhibitions, given to a community in Northern Nigeria. It describes most vividly the atmosphere of excitement which surrounds them.

"It is half-past six in the evening and a big red sun is sinking fast. We have no twilight here in the tropics so in a few minutes it will be quite dark. We are standing near the cinema van looking across a large open space of dark-coloured sand towards hundreds of round mud-houses, all with neatly thatched roofs.

"Above the murmur of hundreds of voices we can hear a hearty laugh, a baby crying, the bleat of a goat, the call of a camel and the beating of a distant tom-tom. Ade, our

A valuable contribution to the education of East African peoples is being made by films produced by local units in Kenya and Uganda. (Below) *Films on Road Safety need to be given high priority in countries where many new roads are being built and traffic problems are rapidly increasing*





The Cyprus Television Film Unit is staffed entirely by local technicians who were trained in London.
(Above) *A scene from* Road Safety, *which was made in Cyprus to meet the particular needs of Nicosia.*
(Below) *The road-crash victim who always thought "safety first" was meant for others—not for him!*





Films on agriculture figure largely in the production programmes of all British Overseas Territories. Their makers know that nothing the film can offer will match the audience's experience of real life. (Above) Better Farming, *which demonstrated the benefits of paddock and rotational grazing in Uganda.* (Below) Citrus Harvest, *a Jamaican film which helped to raise the standard of grapefruit for export*





People are much more readily persuaded to change their behaviour if they can be brought to identify action on the screen with their own by films which fully employ local idiom and characters, such as (above) *Tijani in* Good Business, *made in Western Nigeria to promote cooperative marketing of cocoa.* (Below) Weaving in Togoland, *a film about village industries, introduced a chief and his followers*





Nigeria Greets her Queen, *filmed in colour by the Nigerian Film Unit, was a historic record of the Royal visit to Nigeria in 1956. In addition to wide local distribution, it was exhibited commercially throughout the United Kingdom after a pre-release showing in London*

African mechanic, has just started the engines in the cinema van. They make electricity. Now the loud-speakers are bellowing forth a rousing march—yes, bellowing is the word, for the music can be heard over a mile away. Now the people pause to listen to the music and so our interpreter—his name is Sadu Bauchi—switches over to the microphone and he is inviting the people to come along to the cinema van as we have something interesting to tell them and show them. Look! Here they come, hundreds and hundreds of them, running from all directions, laughing and shouting and asking each other what it's all about. Sadu Bauchi is busy telling them where to sit on the ground to get a good view of the cinema screen. The Chief and his followers arrive, dressed in white flowing robes with white turbans wound round their heads. The crowd is nicely settled now. It's only three minutes since we started the engines and here we are looking on a sea of black faces—three thousand of them—and how their white teeth and eyes show up against their dark faces in this fading light!

"It is almost dark now and Sadu Bauchi is talking to the people about diseases which we know are present in the town. He is telling them where these diseases begin and how they can be prevented. The crowd are quiet as they sit and listen open-mouthed. Now the first film has started and as these people have never seen a cinema film in their lives before, there is much shouting and laughing as they recognize people and places they know. We are showing them a film of what is being done in other neighbouring towns. The film shows how weak and ill people get if their houses are dirty, and how they get strong when they keep their houses clean. My interpreter asks the people if they think they can do the same things and the crowd answer, in a roar, 'Yes'. Then the Chief goes into the cinema van and tells his people that the advice we have given them tonight is good; he is urging them to do all the things we have told them about. 'Thank you, Chief'. Another film, and aren't the people enjoying it: there is not a thing they miss. A final talk to the people; then we bid them good-night and off they go back to their mud-houses. This has been a great event in their lives and they will discuss what they have seen and heard for weeks to come."

Many of the films made by the territorial film units are instructional in character, such as the Jamaica film *One Way Out* which deals with the banana leaf scar disease, or the Malayan training film *Buffaloes for Ploughing*. Others teach by the time-honoured method of contrast—the good farmer and the bad farmer as in the Central African Film Unit's film *The Two Farmers* and the good and the bad housewife in the Barbados film *Better Living*. To British eyes the contrast in this film may appear too great, the sluttish housewife too feckless and the thrifty orderly lady too good to be true. But the Barbadian director of the film knew his West Indian audience and husbands made no bones about pointing out to their wives how closely they resembled the bad housewife in the film.

Sometimes a film is intended to get across and encourage a new idea, maybe on a



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The more remote the area, the greater the opportunity for the film to exercise its influence for good. (Above) *An appreciative audience in Malaya.* (Below) *The latest type of self-contained cinema van, the "Filmrover", which is capable of providing open-air demonstrations in the most distant rural districts*

By courtesy of British Films Ltd



cooperative enterprise or literacy for girls or self-help. For example, the Malayan film *Rohani Steps Out* tells the story of a lonely young wife whose life is transformed after she joins a Women's Institute, an institution successfully introduced into Malaya by Lady Templer. *The Letter*, again a film in story form, does a similar useful job in encouraging education for girls in Malayan villages.

In Jamaica a story film *Praedial Larceny* has also been successful in directing public opinion and obtaining the public's help against the prevalent night-time thieving of crops which is a constant source of anxiety to the small grower and public alike.

The film *You can help your Children* tells how villagers provided themselves with a much-needed nursery school; materials, money, labour and services being provided by voluntary contribution. This kind of object-lesson in self-help and community spirit is indeed a popular and useful category of film.

The story film is, of course, the most effective means of conveying ideas and information to unsophisticated audiences and in this sphere the local-born film director is naturally very much at home, using 'local idiom' in his narrative which gives the film an authenticity for local audiences that few expatriate directors could achieve. The more familiar the background, the greater the impact of the films upon the audience.

One of the most difficult problems in colonial film-making is to produce films which aim at changing behaviour or attitude of mind. An interesting example of this kind of film is *Back to Community*, made in Nigeria. This is a three-reel film on leprosy made for general audiences by an all-African production team. It is not a teaching film on leprosy treatment although it does outline what modern treatment involves. The fear of ostracism and banishment from the community which results in failure to come forward for treatment is always a major obstacle in the fight against leprosy. The film's primary aim is to eliminate this fear from the minds of the public, sufferers and non-sufferers alike, by showing that, if treated early enough, leprosy can be cured. The message is conveyed through the story of a young man who, finding that he has contracted leprosy, first obtains treatment in secret from the local witch-doctor; only when that fails is he persuaded by his wife to go to the medical clinic. He goes to a leper settlement (the village visited by H.M. the Queen during her recent visit to Nigeria) where eventually his cure is completed and he returns to the outside world a happy, healthy man, officially certified free from leprosy. The sympathetic handling of this simple story gives a moving quality which enhances the film's practical impact by approaching the subject in terms of human happiness as well as freedom from disease.

When the Colonial Film Unit was closed down in March 1955 many overseas film units expressed deep concern at the cutting off of all contact with the organization which had created them and had provided them with advice and guidance and a full range of technical services for sixteen years. They realized that film units working in isolation cannot keep pace with rapidly changing techniques and continue to produce satisfactory films without direct contact with one of the large centres of the film industry.

This difficulty was partly appreciated when Mr Sellers was asked to remain in the service of the United Kingdom Government to provide an advisory service to overseas governments. But there was still a gap caused by the severance of the technical services. Happily this has been filled by the courageous action of a number of the staff of the Colonial Film Unit who, headed by its chief editor, Mr Victor Gover, have formed a company to maintain on a commercial basis the technical services which the Colonial Office had decided to discontinue. It is to be known as the Overseas Film and Television Centre.

This arrangement has proved highly satisfactory in providing the overseas territories with the kind of assistance they need—so much so that many of them have appointed the new organization as their official London agents to look after their interests and provide a much wider comprehensive service both for films and for the "tele-ciné" side of television. The organization has recently been expanded to meet the rapidly increasing demands now being made upon it and additional premises have been acquired to accommodate the growing staff. Mr Sellers is closely associated with its work.

At the present time there are no less than thirty-one film units operating in British territories overseas and the total expenditure on production and distribution has now reached over £500,000 per annum. The production output of these units exceeds 300,000 feet of film per annum representing over 250 film titles.

One of the problems is to provide training, and a film school has now been established in London, a development which is likely to have an important effect on future production.

Buddhism and the Burmese

by BRIAN THOMAS

Ten years ago this month Burma became an independent state outside the British Commonwealth. Much is heard of the internal differences by which the country is still divided; little—perhaps not enough—of a powerful and, in most respects, unifying influence, the Buddhist faith. Its history in Burma and the part it plays in Burmese everyday life are the subject of the following article

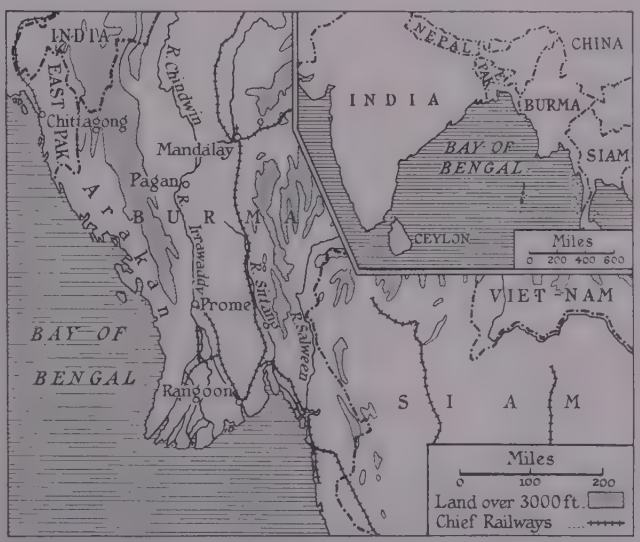
"The temple of this Idol is a very sumptuous edifice, situated in the midst of a plain upon a little round hill, more than half a league in circuit."

Thus wrote Fernando Mendes Pinto of the Shwe Dagon pagoda at Rangoon in 1545; and it seems that for once the much-travelled Portuguese was content to leave the truth unadorned.

Then, as now, the local pagoda was the centre of Burmese life, a social as well as a religious meeting-place. Then, as now, Buddhism exerted a great, if not always obvious, influence on the daily life of the vast majority of Burmans.

The image which Pinto called an Idol is still there; it represents Gautama Buddha, who was born in 563 B.C. in Northern India, the son of a minor prince whose lands lay immediately to the south of Nepal. In what was to be his last incarnation he is said to have been of glorious intelligence, character and appearance. A life of leisure and pleasure was his for the taking, but at the age of twenty-nine, being moved to compassion by the sight of the sick and the poor outside his father's palace, he renounced his heritage and left his home to become a hermit, with a call to save himself and humanity. After six years of mortification, meditation and inner struggles he sensed that he was approaching the goal of countless earlier lives. In 528 B.C. he achieved pure Enlightenment and in 483 B.C. he died. I will describe shortly how Buddhism came to be established in Burma; let us first glance at it in action there today.

Religion is an essential feature in the daily life of the average Burman: his Sunday visit to the pagoda with his family, all in their finest silks, is a social as well as a religious occasion. There is nothing solemn or forbidding about the pagoda: it is a mixture of forum and temple, and it echoes to the laughter of children. Every Burmese Buddhist boy must at some time don the saffron robe of the *phongyi* or monk. The *shin-byu* (head-shaving) ceremony at which this is done is the most important in his life and his parents will think nothing of spending several months' income to entertain their friends—and even complete strangers—at the ceremony. Advantage is often taken of the shin-byu ceremony of a boy to hold his sister's ear-boring ceremony, a social affair having no religious significance. Some of the accompanying photographs were taken at such a joint celebration, and are evidence of the charming hospitality of the Burmese to strangers. The boy and girl shown are the children of an eminent Rangoon surgeon and his doctor wife; the ceremonies were being held in their garden and I was admiring from outside the composure of the little girl who sat quite motionless in her magnificent clothes. Seeing my interest, the parents



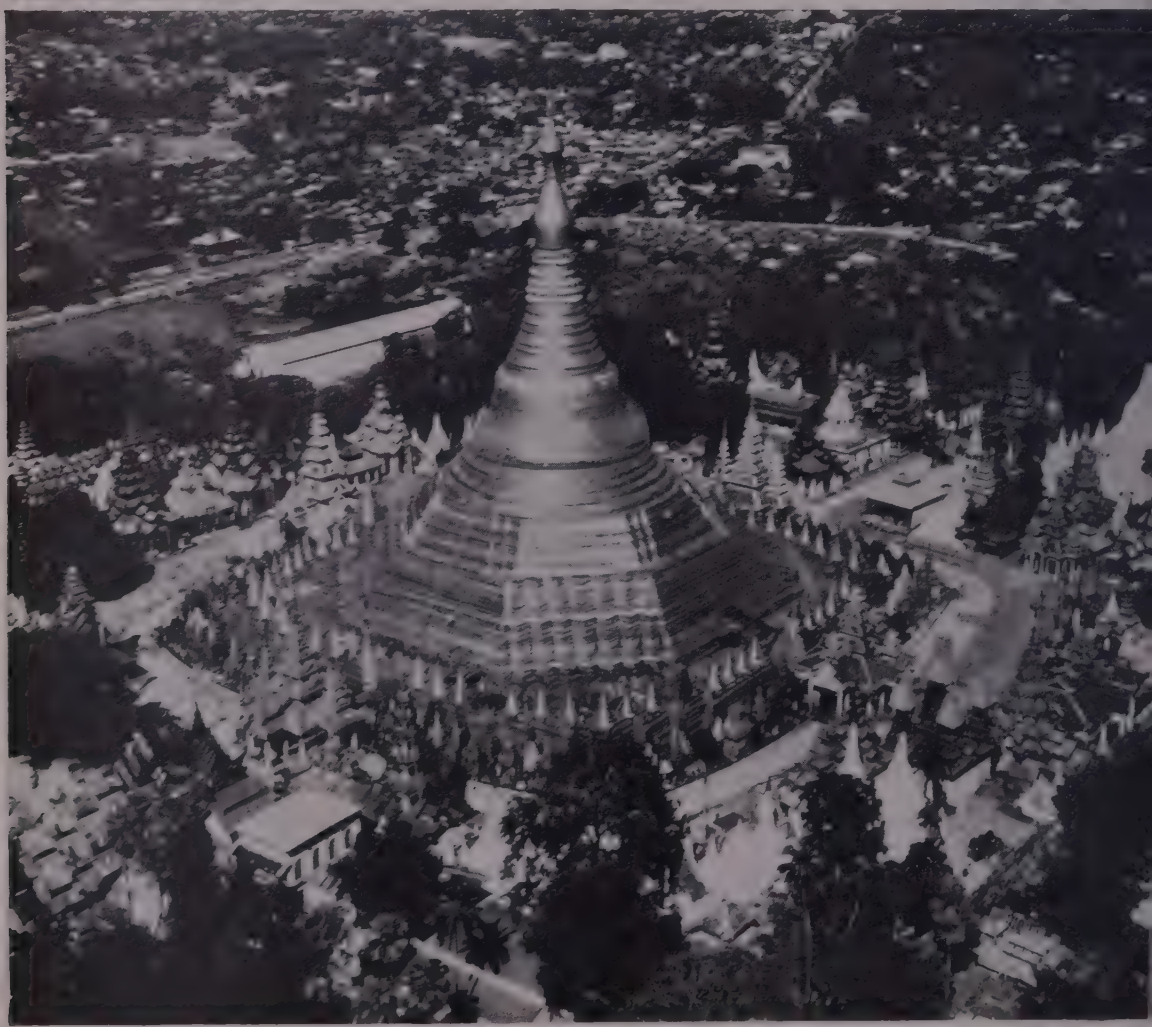
A. J. Thornton

immediately invited me to join their guests. The shin-byu ceremony began; the boy's and the parents' praises were extolled by an elder and then, to signify the renunciation of earthly goods as Buddha had renounced them, the boy took off his fine clothes, his head was shaved and he donned the simple saffron robe which, with begging-bowl, parasol and slippers, comprises the worldly goods of a phongyi. His parents and others present then did obeisance to him as a monk.

A novice's stay at the monastery may be for only a few days or for several months or for life, depending on circumstances, but some residence in a phongyi-kyaung, as the monastery is called, is obligatory. This word "kyaung" is also the Burmese word for school, since it is the priesthood which has always taught the arts of writing and reading to Burmese children, with the result that Burma has long had a high percentage of people who could be called literate. The real need has been for wider primary and secondary education, which has been almost entirely in the hands of missionary organizations. All schools are co-educational, and women in Burma not only have at least as much independence and authority as the men but are generally accepted to be their superiors in business acumen. They have

"The temple of this Idol is a very sumptuous edifice" : the Shwe Dagon pagoda at Rangoon, with its gleaming cone covered in pure gold-leaf and the summit of its pinnacle in solid gold plate, studded with jewels. It stands on the northern edge of the town, surrounded by monastery buildings

By courtesy of the Burmah Oil Co., Ltd





Kodachromes by Khin Lay Maung

Pagan, from the Ananda pagoda. Capital of the first Burmese kings, Pagan was begun by King Anaurahta in A.D. *1054. Now it is a deserted city; scarcely a hundred stupas and pagodas are left of the 5000 it contained in its heyday. It covers a wide area on the banks of the Irrawaddy, in the flat Central Burma plain, looking across to bleak mountains. The Ananda pagoda, the most imposing of those that remain, was called after Buddha's cousin and favourite disciple. Like the other buildings at Pagan, it is markedly Indian in style, having a tall base-terrace surmounted by a conical central mass and being built of stone, whereas the Burmese habitually built in brick or wood; this has helped to preserve the buildings*



The shin-byu *or head-shaving ceremony is an important moment in the life of every Burmese boy. The elaborate clothes he wears are based on those of the ancient kings and warriors of Burma, and symbolize the riches put aside by Buddha when he renounced his worldly life. Similarly the boy doffs them, his head is shaved and he puts on instead the saffron robes of a monk. After the ceremony he goes for a time—a few days or even for life—to a monastery. There are many monasteries in Burma, for monks are so numerous that in some parts they are reputed to form one-tenth of the population. They are all regarded with veneration and respect; while their political influence in the country is greatly increasing*

Women may also become members of the priesthood in Burma (their heads are shaved like those of the men, but they wear shell-pink robes instead of saffron). No religious importance, however, attached to the ear-boring ceremony of the daughter of a Rangoon surgeon, attended by the author; it was held, for convenience, at the same time as her brother's shin-byu, since both involve a good deal of expense. Burma is remarkable for the part played by its women, who have as much say in public life as men, occupying distinguished positions in government, business and the professions





Women worshipping at the pagoda built by U Nu, the Prime Minister of Burma, and dedicated to World Peace. Behind the statue of Buddha is a mural of the Bo-tree under which he attained Enlightenment

Religion forms an important part of the everyday family life of the Burmese. They usually attend the pagoda on a Sunday (which has no special significance, but is a non-working day) and often during the week. (Above) *Worshippers at the Shwe Dagon pagoda.* (Below) *The funeral of the chief monk of Burma*



graced the legal and medical professions in Burma almost as long as in England, and have also reached Ministerial rank.

Burmese Buddhism has certain features which require historical explanation. Gautama Buddha had been brought up as an orthodox Brahmin. The scriptures relate that at the time of his Enlightenment the Hindu god Brahma besought him to preach the Dhamma (doctrine) to mankind. This was not a religion but a moral philosophy aimed at purifying the corrupt state of Brahminism, and Buddha himself expected that only a few would understand. Buddha died in 483 B.C., and as Buddhism was carried further afield its extreme tolerance led to its absorbing the indigenous beliefs of the countries to which it spread. What Buddha had intended as a moral philosophy for the few became a religion for the masses. His ashes were divided into ten parts and given to the rulers of the lands where he had lived. Over them were built *stupas* from which the pagoda was developed. Reverence for the relics all too soon became a cult; Buddha the human came to be venerated as Buddha the super-human, and his spirit was regarded as having entered a pantheon almost as large as that of the Hinduism from which he had revolted. Buddhism came to include religion, ritual, yoga, mysticism, philosophy and even magic. Everywhere it raised the level of indigenous culture, sometimes (as in the case of the T'ang dynasty in China) to its apogee, while setting examples of tolerance, compassion and gentleness unhappily not matched in the history of most other religions.

On Buddha's death a Synod was called to decide for perpetuity the exact contents of the three Pitakas, or Baskets, of the Buddhist Canon. In the century or so which elapsed before a second Synod was convened there had been plenty of time for differences to arise, and from this second Synod probably stemmed the first of the manifold sects into which Buddhism soon splintered. The most important of these were the supporters of the Mahayana (the great or expanded vehicle) and of the Hinayana (the smaller vehicle); the former maintained that Buddhahood was inherent in man who did but need to develop it; the latter held that it could only be attained by strict observance of Buddha's Rules of Discipline.

The greatest propagator of Buddhism was the Indian King Asoka who, in 264 B.C., inherited the Mauryan empire founded by his grandfather Chandragupta. Chandragupta had wrested the Indian provinces of Alexander the Great from Alexander's general and successor in Asia, Seleucus. After attempting military expansion in the earlier years of his reign, Asoka, revolted by the horrors of war, adopted Buddhism and showed what Buddhist doctrine can do for a nation if once freed from monastic limitations. He sent missionaries as far afield as the Mediterranean and to Ceylon and to Burma, which both he and Ptolemy called "The Golden Land".

Although Burmese Buddhists today are of the Theraveda (Doctrine of the Elders) School which approximates to the Hinayana rather than the Mahayana, the teaching introduced into Burma by Asoka's missionaries was probably a mixture of both. During the next thousand years it became interwoven with the indigenous "nat" (nature spirit) worship which is still prevalent in Burma today. Countless little wayside shrines and bouquets of flowers on the bonnets of dilapidated buses passing through dangerous districts testify to the truth of the saying that the Burmese Buddhist loves the Buddha but fears the "nats".

The race we know as Burmese did not arrive in Burma until a thousand years after Asoka sent his missionaries. They were the last of successive waves of Mongol races who found the country by following the Irrawaddy and Salween rivers through the Himalayas from their sources in south-eastern Tibet.

The first wave, known as Talaings or Mons, seems to have found the Salween, for it was at the mouth of that river that they settled and established what was later to become the kingdom of Martaban. They were followed by the Krans, who crossed the Yoma mountains to settle in what we know as Arakan; the Pyus, who established a local kingdom at Prome; and finally, around A.D. 800, by the people we call Burmese, who, finding the earlier arrivals already in occupation of the rich coastal and delta areas, had to content themselves with the less fertile central plain. There, on the eastern bank of the Irrawaddy, Burmese history emerges from legend; while, in distant Europe, William of Normandy was extracting from Harold the famous oath on the bones of the saints, King Anaurahta established, in Pagan, his capital and the first dynasty of Burmese kings, and in so doing provided the first exact date in Burmese history: A.D. 1054.

On hearing two itinerant monks from Thaton preaching the purer form of Buddhism which had been practised there for



e author

(Above) *Buddhist monks rely mainly on food put into their begging-bowls as they go from house to house. But here a group of women have brought a hot meal to the pagoda and sit watching while the monks eat it.*
(Below) *After a good meal comes timely aid to digestion: boys massaging a monk's back in the pagoda*

author

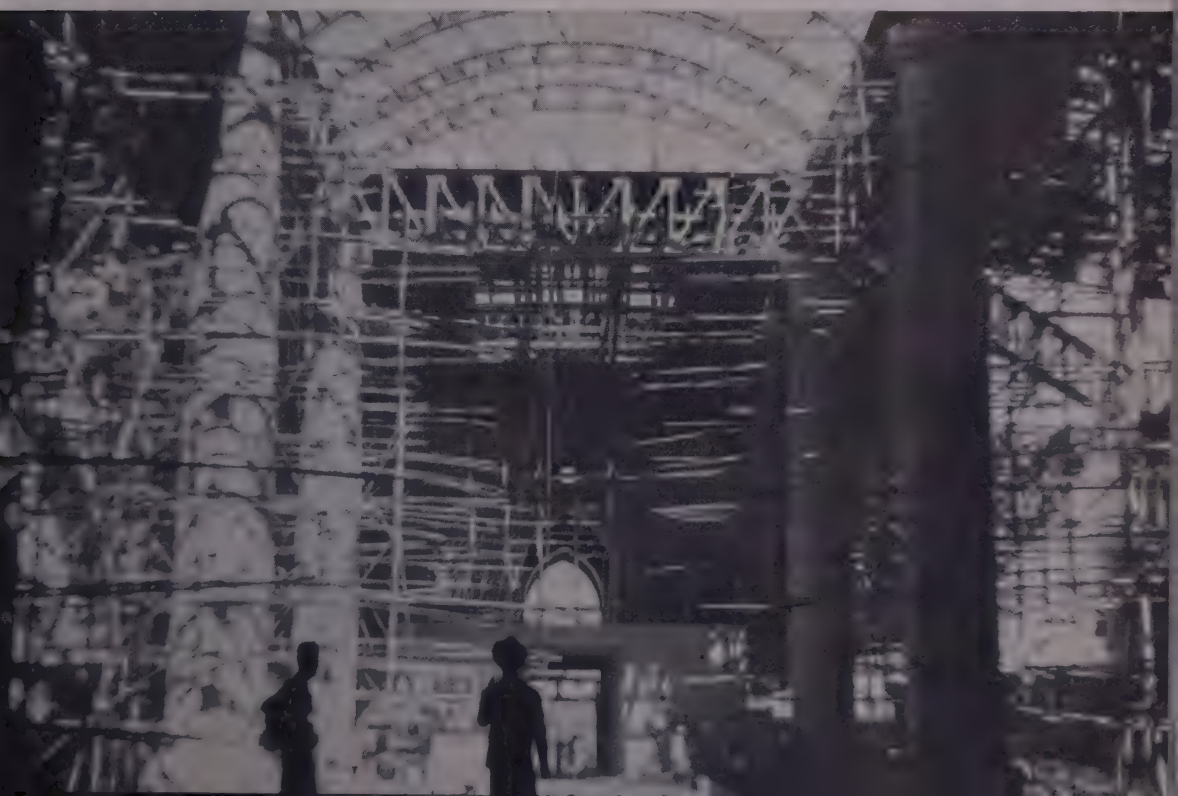




Khin Lay Maung

(Above) *Peacocks, the national emblem of Burma, in a procession. The Burmese indulge their love of processions on every possible occasion, and make the most of the many festivals that punctuate the Buddhist calendar.* (Below) *The huge artificial cave built by U Nu's government for the Sixth Buddhist Synod*

The author



centuries, Anaurahta expelled the debased Ari priesthood and declared war on the unfortunate king of Thaton because he alone possessed the words of Buddha. These were written in Pali, a tongue of Sanskrit origin unknown to the Burmese, so that when Anaurahta eventually emerged victorious at enormous cost and returned to his capital with the scriptures, he had to rely on Thaton captives to interpret them and to teach the tongue which was to become one of the sources of modern Burmese, and to remain the medium in which the scriptures are preserved.

Anaurahta was the Asoka of Burma and, though there can hardly be any comparison in terms of the architectural and constructional skills involved, it is of interest that at a time when work was starting in Europe on the great abbeys and cathedrals of Vézelay, Cluny, Bourges, Chartres and a score of others, Anaurahta's capital boasted no fewer than five thousand stupas and pagodas and must have been a magnificent city. Today it is deserted, but we can still gain some impression of its glory thanks to a dry, clear climate similar to that which has preserved the treasures of more ancient Mediterranean civilizations.

A century later there was built, in Rangoon, the sumptuous edifice with its crown of plated gold which left Pinto at a loss for exaggeration, and of which another 16th-century traveller, Ralph Fitch, declared: "The fayrest place, as I suppose, that doe bee in all the worlde."

Burmese history was chaotic from the start. In the 13th century Pagan was sacked by Kublai Khan after one of Anaurahta's descendants had been misguided enough to chop off the heads of three of his ambassadors and of their suites in turn. Later history tells of long periods of war with the Shans, the Talaings and others, interspersed with further short-lived dynasties. The last of these was founded in 1758 and might well have endured to this day had it not been for the arrogance of King Thibaw, which eventually forced the British Viceroy in India to annex his country in three campaigns, the last of which ended in 1886.

Through all this, and throughout the period of British rule, Buddhism flourished and the yellow robe was everywhere to be seen.

When Burma gained independence, ten years ago this month, the country was still torn by serious insurgency, with three separate Communist groups and the Karens in open revolt. U Nu, the first Prime Minister of the Union of Burma, who still holds that office, is a devout Buddhist who realized that Buddhism could be the highest common factor in unifying a land sorely torn by internal strife. While tolerating and encouraging the ministers of other religions he prepared the climate for a great spiritual revival by arranging for his war-scarred country to provide the venue for a great Buddhist Synod.

In 2400 years since the Second Synod there had been only three more attended by the Hinayana sects. According to legend they had been convened in great caves in the mountains to protect the delegates from the influences of a sinful world. There are plenty of mountains and caves in Burma, but in 1952 the lack of internal security and of adequate transport meant that it would not be practical to hold the Sixth Synod anywhere except in the capital: and Rangoon had no caves and no mountains; not even a noticeable hill. U Nu decided that since the monks could not go to the mountains, he would bring a mountain, or at least a cave and a hill, to the monks.

So it was that, at a time when Burma was desperately short of hospitals, sanitation, schools and roads and of the money with which to build them, U Nu's government sanctioned the construction of a great artificial cave which was eventually reported to have cost about £1,000,000. It was built on the outskirts of the city and covered with rocks and grass to resemble a small hill, while immediately beside it work was begun on a Pali University which would also house the many delegates to the Synod. Finally, U Nu himself provided a pagoda which he dedicated to World Peace.

The Sixth Buddhist Synod was duly opened and lasted for two years, the completion of its labours immediately preceding the 25th centenary of Buddha's Enlightenment.

U Nu is remarkable for devoutness not as a Burman but as a world politician. He has tried to practise Buddhist tolerance in his treatment of insurgent captives, by training them to become useful citizens. It may be asked why, if Buddhism teaches gentleness, Burma should have suffered civil war since 1946. The answer is that the fighting has nothing to do with religion, though as it happens it was started and is continued by self-declared Communists, who are theoretically atheist, and by Karens, who are Baptists. Burma's uneasy history, like the fact that it has perhaps the highest murder rate of any country in the free world, is not because of Buddhism but in spite of it.

Lord Howe Island today; and its Early Settlers

by MARY de BUNSEN

If any place deserves to be called remote it is Lord Howe Island, 480 miles from Sydney and 560 miles from Norfolk Island, the nearest land after Australia. Yet with the advent of the air age it has become a tourist centre and the author, who stayed there six months, was able to observe the effects of this great change on the islanders and to record their recollections of an earlier time

I READ about Lord Howe Island twenty years ago in a book by Francis Chichester, who had rebuilt his damaged Moth seaplane there in the course of a trans-Tasman Sea flight which was, of its time, an outstanding feat of navigation and airmanship. His description of the place remained in my mind but, as it was on the opposite side of the world, I never thought seriously about getting there until one day, in a travel bureau in Sydney, I discovered that the island of my dreams was only three hours away by flying-boat. The rest was easy.

In the war I had been a ferry pilot, so they courteously invited me into the second pilot's seat of the big Hythe, where I took the controls for a few minutes. But I handed them back to the automatic pilot when I remembered how small a landfall is an island five-and-a-half miles from end to end after 480 miles of ocean. When we got there, Lord Howe was unmistakable, for Mount Gower, of distinctive shape, is 2835 feet high and Mount Lidgbird not much less, and together they fill about half its area. Anyway, there is nothing else but a few small rocks and islets for hundreds of miles, except for Ball's Pyramid, an astonishing needle of rock which rises to 1816 feet from a base only a mile in circumference.

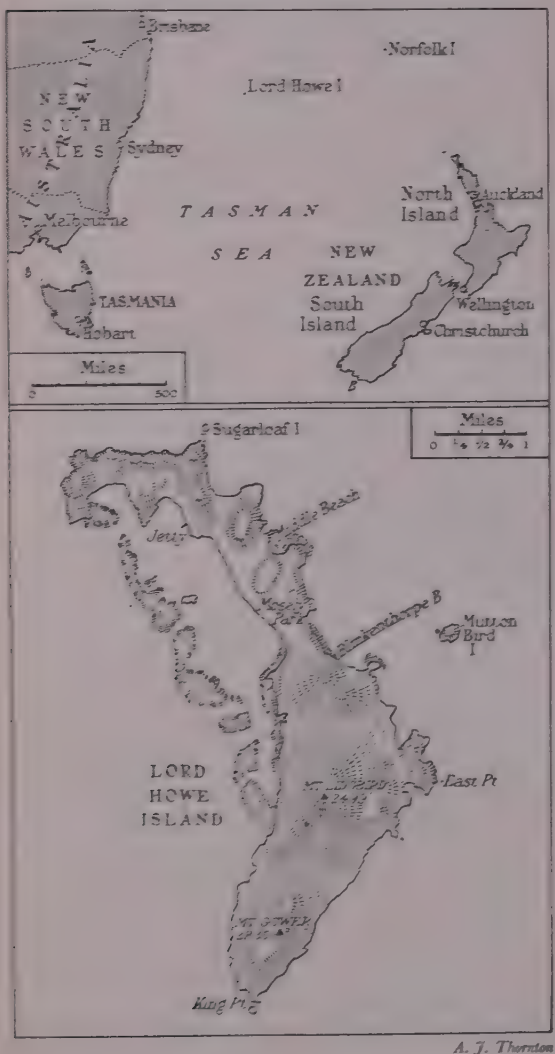
As we flew low over the neck of land that separates the mountainous south end from the inhabited part of the island, I realized that I was not going to be disappointed. A little stream falls 2000 feet sheer from the shoulder of Mount Gower, which breeds its own convection clouds and its own special vegetation in the humid climate of its flat table-top. Gower is an easy walk for tourists, but Mount Lidgbird, which is a more conventional shape, is seldom climbed. Together they dominate the island, dwarfing the few signs of human occupation. Only about 180 people live there, and most of their houses are tucked away among the trees. We caught a glimpse of green pastures among palms and evergreen forest, of sandy bays and rocky beaches and of irregular wooded hills stretching away to the northern rocks and promontories. The fresh wind, which seldom ceases, was blowing straight in from the coral reef, which forms a sort of bow-string to the lagoon, across which we landed. (Lord Howe Island, which is of volcanic origin, has the southernmost coral reef in the world.) We turned and taxied a mile or two to our moorings.

There was a crowd of returning tourists on the jetty, looking rather silly in their city clothes with wreaths of hibiscus (a graceful gesture) round their necks. A burly islander with a reddish moustache held out his hand and said "My name's Kirby" and I remembered that he had kept a guest-house when Chichester was there. I climbed up beside him on a truck, and we bumped along a sandy track with the palms brushing our faces. Now and then we caught a glimpse of the lagoon. No private cars are allowed, but sometimes you meet a survival of earlier days: a horse and sled, which can still go where wheels cannot. You finish up by hiring a bicycle if you don't like walking.

"Oh, yes, I remember Chick," said Kirby. "They're still laughing about the day he went out fishing and caught the boat! He wasn't exactly a tourist, though. We didn't have many till the airline started in 1947. We were in a bit of a hole then, economically. You see, we made our money out of palm-seeds until the war spoiled that so we tried growing vegetable seeds for export. But that only succeeded while other sources of supply were blocked by the war. The flying-boats, and you people, came just in time. They try to keep the numbers down, so as not to spoil the island, but can you blame us for making money while we can? We want to get our kids higher education on the mainland and you can't do that by catching fish."

We pulled up in front of some low, wooden

buildings—Australian style, with cubicles opening onto a long veranda—a few yards from the lagoon. There was a hard tennis-court and a lot of big Norfolk Island pines. There is not much running water on the island and rainwater is stored in tanks. Nearby is one of the sad little cemeteries, which are neglected owing to the superstition that he who tends them will be the next buried. This was the only depressing feature, apart from the rather crowded conditions. It was only just breakfast-time (we had left Sydney at 4 a.m.), but already there were a lot of fellow-tourists about. They are a good crowd when you get to know them, and they spend most of their time dancing to the radio and playing tennis and doing things



A. J. Thornton

that they could just as well do in Sydney, which leaves the rest of the island free for those who like peace and quiet. The miles of beaches are deserted, and even on the lagoon road you seldom meet a tourist.

In spite of full loads, the airlines find the going hard. Flying-boats have to land at high tide on the shallow lagoon, though a site has been surveyed for a short air-strip on the neck of land called Mosely Park for use when these boats (war surplus stock) wear out. Land planes would pay better and provide a link with Norfolk Island and New Zealand. The Burns Philp steamer has ceased calling at Lord Howe but little cargo-boats bring any freight the airlines cannot handle. Some of the glamour will depart with the flying-boats; and so, if there is a hiatus, will the islanders' main livelihood. There is, however, a Micawber element in the island's history. Something always turns up.

Lord Howe Island has been more or less accessible since the days of the Australian gold rush, when sixty or eighty ships a year called there to provision. It was first sighted in 1788 by a British naval officer, Henry Lidgbird Ball, who was on his way to deposit the founders of the penal settlement on Norfolk Island (later replaced by the overflow, from Pitcairn Island, of the descendants of the Bounty mutineers). On his way back he landed and found it uninhabited. Surgeon Bowes of the *Lady Penrhyn* wrote of it a few months later:

> When I was in the woods amongst the Birds I cd. not help picturing to myself the Golden Age as described by Ovid—to see the Fowls or Coots some white, some blue and white, others all blue wt. large red bills and a patch of red on the top of their heads and the Boobies in thousands . . . walking totally fearless and unconcerned in all part around us.

The earliest settlers, round about the 1840s, began the slaughter which has left few land-birds on the island. However, they did a useful job supplying ships, for it was risky to provision at Sydney where whole crews would desert and make their way to the goldfields. Local whaling contributed to this artificial boom, but when it subsided, visiting ships diminished to one or two a year and the islanders settled down to subsistence farming.

It was Kirby's mother Edith, now seventy-seven years old, who first told me about those days. Sleeping on the veranda, I would awake to see her spare and upright figure quietly attending to the garden before the heat of the day. She has been to England and America and her parents, a family called

All photographs from the author



Lord Howe Island—five rocky square miles isolated in the Tasman Sea—was first sighted by Henry Lidgbird Ball in 1788. Today it is governed as a dependency of New South Wales through a resident administrator with an advisory committee of three of the island's 180 inhabitants. (Above) *The view southwards across the lagoon towards Mount Lidgbird, the 2499-foot peak named after the island's discoverer, with the flat-topped Mount Gower (2835 feet high) on the right. In the left foreground is the main landing-jetty.* (Right) *Ball's Pyramid, a lonely sugarloaf of rock, some eleven miles to the south-east of Lord Howe Island. Rising sheer out of the sea to a height of 1816 feet, it has never been climbed. Fishing in the waters around is excellent*

Andrews, were among the earliest settlers.

"We simply had to go around and get our own food," she said. "We went and got mutton-birds and we raised our own pigs and made our own bacon. We used to spice meat and smoke it, and the men and women used to go out and fish and we salted and smoked the fish and put them by. Now half of them go to Sydney and we get tinned stuff instead. We had a lot of citrus fruits and we used to grow and grind our own corn and coffee. We had corn [maize] bread, which was very nice, and stacks of bananas. You would be able to see nothing else but rows and rows of bananas and pumpkins. We didn't buy much food from the ships except sugar, tea and flour, and I do remember being short of that, but otherwise we had plenty of everything. We made our own shoes, a kind of moccasin, out of goat-skins, but of course we always had a pair of Sunday shoes and we used to fancy ourselves when we got dressed up on a Sunday."

There is a picture in John Thompson's house of his sisters about this time; typical Victorian little girls who might have been in Kensington Gardens. John's brother Willy, a magnificent old man, was chief of the Island Advisory Committee when we stayed there, but it was John and his sister Emily Dignam who told us the story of their parentage. "Auntie Emmie" shared her son Phil's house in which we spent our last three months on the island. A most amusing old lady with no inhibitions, she got very fond of us and the parting from her was a sad one, for she died soon after. She didn't drink and Phil was a teetotaller, but she kept a bottle of gin in her sideboard for visitors (there are no public-houses on the island). To mix the drinks, you reached out of the back door and picked a fresh lemon off a tree, and if you threw in a few little red guavas the result was heavenly. These little guavas were particularly good with cream—a bit acid, with a faint taste of strawberries.

Emily Dignam's brothers and sisters were the first generation on the island and already getting old when we were there. John is eighty now and the only one of them still living as I write. Their father, Nathan Thompson, was the captain of a whaler from Massachusetts. He settled on Lord Howe in 1853, bringing with him three native ladies from the neighbourhood of the Gilbert Islands whom he had found adrift in a canoe. He married one, who died nine years later, with their son, of measles, which took its usual toll of an isolated community. Then he married Bogue, the youngest, from whom a number of the islanders are descended. You can see some of them in the early family group which Auntie Emmie gave me.

"That's the oldest house on the island," said John one day, pointing to a wing of his present bungalow. "My father built it. See those planks? He cut them in a sawpit from some big logs that were washed up providentially, for heavy timber has always been scarce. Father could do anything with his hands, for as a boy at home he used to notice how things were done. When one of my brothers died of lockjaw, he sat down and studied the complaint in books, and later he cured another boy who went down with the same symptoms. Dosed him with ether. He owned a share in a small craft, the *Sylph*, which used to carry island produce to Sydney till she was lost at sea."

Lord Howe Island is both hospitable and absolutely exclusive. We owed our qualified acceptance there to my companion Grizel, who became Phil Dignam's secretary and got about a lot; for I remained an enigmatic, seated figure with a weak heart and a typewriter. Some of the islanders take things easy, but Phil is dairy-farmer, market-gardener, butcher, agent for petrol and oil, soft-drink manufacturer and part-time fisherman. He also entertained a lot with the aid of his wife Minnie, whose distinguished appearance belies the fact that she does two women's work as Phil does at least two men's. Grizel's duties included typing, accounts, gutting fish, Saturday mornings in the freezer parcelling out beef and (literally) bottle-washing. The children did the milking and sometimes let me milk a cow when Phil wasn't looking. Minnie, who now runs a guest-house, cooked us lovely food and I mostly sat and listened to the people who dropped in and out at any time of day. They also entertained the cricket team from Sydney (the neighbouring parish on the other side is Norfolk Island, 560 miles away).

On Lord Howe there is no coloured native population, but you gradually become aware of two religious groups. "We had no pastor in the old days," Auntie Emmie explained, "so things like weddings and christenings had to wait for a ship; the religious part anyway, though a civil marriage was performed by the Registrar when it looked like being a long wait. We children were all out getting mutton-birds and had to be washed and brushed up in a hurry when a missionary arrived in a ship called the *Dayspring* to christen my brother John."

SCANNED



(Above) "*A glimpse of green pastures among palms and evergreen forest . . .*" *A Lord Howe landscape with* Howea *palms, oleanders and Norfolk Island pines. In the distance are Mounts Lidgbird and Gower.* (Below) *The houses on Lord Howe Island, bungalows in the Australian style, are generally built by their owners. The big rain-water tanks are a necessity as there are only two springs on the island*



Until World War II Lord Howe Island depended on the export of seeds of the Howea Forsteriana *palm, the florist's palm once so familiar in European hotels and now suffering a decline in popularity—to the detriment of the island's prosperity.* (Above) *From March to September the islanders pick the seeds, here being stored for export.* (Below) *A few horse-drawn sleds are still used; motor-vehicles are rare*



Tourists returning from a three-hour "round the island" trip in a motor-boat. After the decline of the palm-seed industry, the islanders turned for a while to the export of vegetable seeds, but that only lasted until just after the war. Then, in the nick of time, the situation was saved by the development of the tourist trade. Flying-boats bring the visitors from Sydney to enjoy the island's romantic scenery, the brilliant coral life of the lagoon, as well as the more prosaic pastimes of tennis and dancing

She went on to tell me that about half the islanders have been Seventh-Day Adventists since Pastor Cole was weatherbound for a fortnight in 1895 and held meetings in Nathan Thompson's house. The rest are Church of England, and the two little wooden churches, quite good friends, nestle side by side between the school and the cricket-ground, on the road by the lagoon.

"But some funny things came out of ships sometimes," Auntie Emmie went on. "You know Mosely Park, the neck of land by Blinkie Beach? That was where Alan and Johanna Mosely lived, and they were married by the Registrar, but it wasn't made legal for fifty years. A lot happened before that, though; Johanna told me about it herself. You see, she arrived in a packing-case.

"Yes, a packing-case. Her sweetheart had smuggled her aboard in it at Sydney. When the Captain found out he was so wild that he put them both ashore on Lord Howe, which was the first land he saw. She must have been used to shocks by that time, but she had another, for the first thing she saw when she stepped out was a man imprisoned in a barrel. He had been giving trouble and we never had a prison, then or now, so they kept him that way until they could ship him back to Sydney. He brought a lawsuit about it and the Registrar had to pay him £50 compensation.

"But Johanna never married her sweetheart, for she fell in love with Alan Mosely. See them here," and she pulled out two old daguerreotypes; Johanna demure and colourless in the fashion of the time and Alan dark, stern and dashing. "They were very happy but they had no children. Herbert Wilson's still got the packing case. You can see the air-holes made for her to breathe.

"Yes, I've had a good life, but I've been poorly since I went over to Sydney for a holiday and was in a motor-smash. I'd like to go to England if it was only to hear the birds singing. That must be wonderful, for they only chirrup here. Come in again,

This photograph, one of the earliest taken on Lord Howe Island, shows one of the early settlers, Nathan Thompson, with his family. Standing with him are his sons John (left) and Willie (right). Seated on the right is his daughter "Auntie Emmie" Dignam and next to her his wife Bogue whom he found drifting in a canoe off the Gilbert Islands. He brought her with him to Lord Howe in 1853

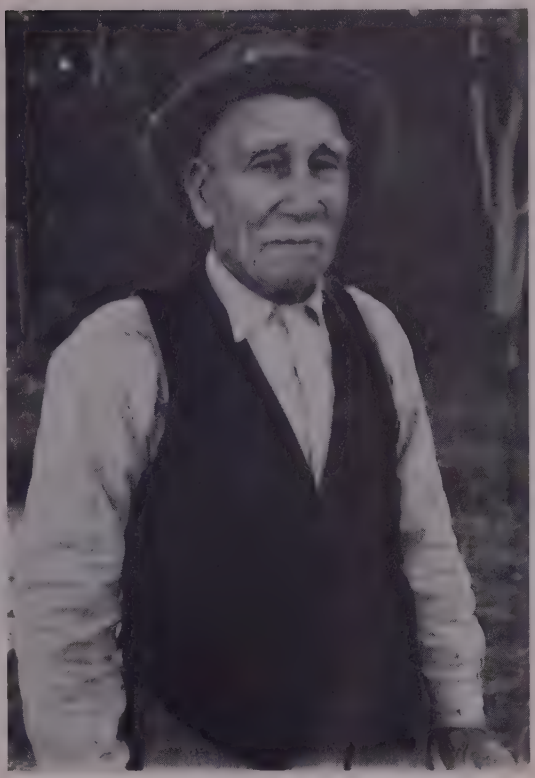


won't you, for I like talking about the old days. And bring Grizel, only she's always so busy."

There was a tragedy during our stay, for two of the men were drowned when their boat was wrecked in a gale. A preference for fast, flimsy craft and a somewhat happy-go-lucky attitude to boating takes its toll. Apart from that, serious trouble seemed very far from the "backblocks" as they call the high, wooded country inland. The track from the lagoon led uphill through a wide, green pasture, incongruously called "Middle Beach Road". Beyond the palms and oleanders you could see the light changing on the frowning precipices of Gower and Lidgbird, and the brilliant green of the lagoon with the blue of deep water beyond the reef. When you stopped for breath you heard, even in the calmest weather, the sound of breakers, coming from one side or the other. As the island was only about half a mile across you could always picnic on the sheltered side, grilling steaks on a fire of driftwood and palm branches, which made a lovely blaze. Higher up, the path led through evergreen woods, with some big banyan trees, out onto the cliffs, where you stood and watched the long swell rolling in from the Pacific. The family went to bed early, and afterwards you could go up there in the clear moonlight and sit on the edge of the world, with nothing except a few rocks between you and South America, 6000 miles away.

Once a year, on a fixed day in March, most of the islanders knock off work and start to pick palm-seeds, the season lasting until September. The first schoolmaster, an Englishman called Thomas Bryant Wilson (who also brought over the first Norfolk Island pines), discovered that the indigenous palm (formerly *Kentia* and now called *Howea Forsteriana*) grew well in cool climates. In fact it is the palm you still see in old-fashioned hotels in England. He founded the socialized palm-seed industry which brought the islanders a steady livelihood until World War II. But the quantity exported had fallen from 2500 to about 300 bushels a year when in 1947 the aeroplanes came and brought the tourists with them. Even so, the accumulated funds from this industry still enable the island to be administered without a government grant.

Lord Howe is a dependency of New South Wales. A resident administrator acts for a Board of Control on the mainland and has an Advisory Committee of three islanders. There is a doctor and a nurse on the island and



"A rugged old man with a fine face . . ." Willie Thompson, who appears in the group opposite. He became chief of the Island Advisory Committee

social services are the same as in New South Wales. The question of land tenure and development is nowadays hotly debated. Land belongs to the government, is held rent-free and may be inherited but not exploited, though a recent survey has fixed boundaries and granted limited rights of ownership to islanders only. A wise administration has so far managed to restrict immigration and development, though this is not universally popular. Outsiders are rarely allowed to settle, so the only new blood is brought in by marriage. Visitors ease the inevitable tensions of a small community, but not everybody profits and the elderly may be hard hit. I discussed this one day with Willie Thompson, then chief of the Advisory Committee. A rugged old man with a fine face, he lived very simply. "I wanted to retire", he said, "and hire a boy to dig my garden. I have earned it after all these years. But I cannot pay the wages they pay them in the guest-houses."

It was in search of fresh fruit that we first



Once prolific, land-birds are now rare on Lord Howe Island, having mostly been eaten in the past. But sea-birds abound, especially on the score or more of neighbouring uninhabited rocky islets

met the Jim Dignams. Civilized food has taken its toll of teeth and stamina. Auntie Emmie, who was Jim's sister-in-law, said they never seemed to need a dentist in the old days, but it is a penalty of 'civilization' to lose your teeth at forty as they mostly do now. Many islanders still keep a cow or two and there is the freshest fish in the world—Cod, Trevally, Kingfish and little "Bluies" off the rocks. So you live well in their houses though the guest-houses import most of their food and we saw lemons left to rot upon the trees. Anything will grow there, but few people bother to grow it. Jim is an exception, like his nephew Phil. He does a roaring trade in fruit-salad and cream—pawpaws, bananas and guavas. At eighty-six, he is the oldest resident. His wife Eileen is a mainlander, and their daughters are living in Sydney. Jim and Eileen were very kind to us; we used to have supper and a quiet game of bridge with them on Wednesdays. I would make my way up slowly through the woods as darkness fell, and Grizel would join us when she had finished doing accounts. We came to look forward to these evenings very much. On visitors who stay on as we did, the island exerts a tightening grip. In spite of hard work, Grizel put on weight. One day, deeply tanned and dressed in shirt and shorts—the working garb of nearly every woman under forty—she met Herbert Wilson, who ranks as one of the "elders", on the road to the backblocks. He stopped and surveyed her critically. "Grizpot," he said, not wasting words, "you're spreading." The passage home for which we had been waiting had come through at last; in any case it was clearly time to go.

We only stayed six months on Lord Howe Island, but I have thought a lot about it since we left. An island like this, not too cut off, is a microcosm of advancing civilization. The penalties show up clearly: loss of health and stamina from too-civilized food; increasing worry about making money to buy higher education and consumer goods (not, thank goodness, to "keep up with the Joneses") and the epidemics that tourists bring, though these follow the same world-pattern and are giving way to medical science while degenerative disease is on the increase. Nevertheless, half the island went down with the same type of influenza that was ravaging Australia. To these drawbacks one may add a weekly fever to write all the letters that have been left until the last minute before the flying-boat arrives. But it is a good life still, for those who have the inner resources to live it to the full, and many of the islanders ask for nothing better.

Porvoo: A Portrait of Finnish Provincial Life

by MICHAEL TEAGUE



All photographs by the author

The little port of Porvoo lies on a river that flows into the Gulf of Finland some thirty miles east of Helsinki. Here, where the river widens to the sea, a workman is arranging a logging boom

THE bus which brought me from Helsinki was large and ramshackle and very crowded. I was sitting firmly wedged in the back seat between a drunken sailor and a young teacher when we careered into Porvoo late one summer's afternoon. It was raining and I was tired. The journey, although short, had been conducted at terrifying speed over bad roads; and the effort of having to hold scores for the sailor as he strummed erratically on a banjo, whilst trying to explain the English educational system to the teacher at the same time, had exhausted me. The teacher must have sensed my weariness for, after the bus had decanted us in the market square of the town, he turned to me and said: "Don't go and see the cathedral now" (a friend in Helsinki had told me it was a 'must' for any tourist in Finland). "You will only leave with a wrong impression of our town if you do. Come and take *sauna* first and then you will feel much better." It was my first encounter with that proverbial Finnish quality: kindness and hospitality to strangers. The Finns' generosity in this respect surpasses the mere practice of virtue or duty; it has a warmth and sincerity which are completely disarming. A sauna bath in this instance was the ideal remedy for my jaded spirits. Sauna is the best-known national institution of Finland. For the Finns it is not only a means of getting clean but a form of relaxation and refreshment without which, many of them maintain, life would not be worth living.

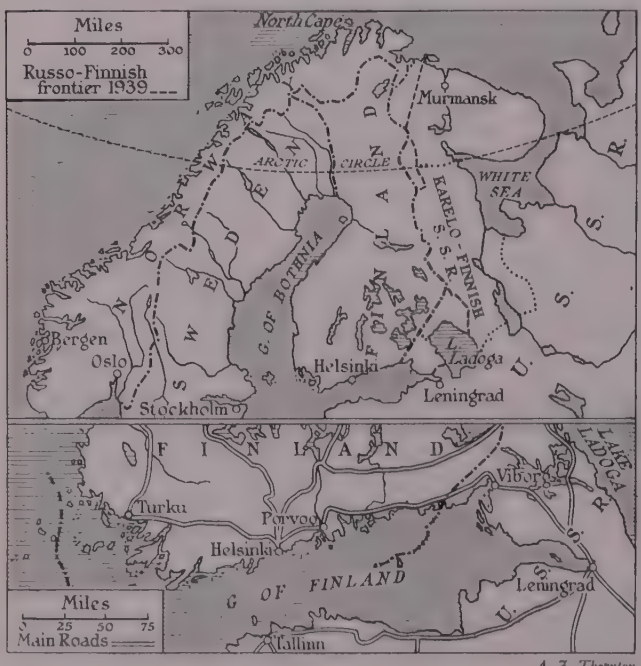
What enchanted me most about Porvoo was the pleasure of contrasts it provided. Finnish towns tend to lack variety. Most of them are 'modern' towns in that they have grown up in the last thirty years or so. They suffer from a certain similarity in lay-out and architecture. Porvoo is different. It is an old town, one of the oldest in fact in Finland. Although it has grown extensively in recent years, it still retains many vestiges of the past. Its magnificent cathedral, which guards the town from a hilltop perch, was built in 1414. Narrow cobbled streets link the old part of the town, which clusters round this cathedral, with the new. And 18th-century timbered warehouses, with heavy iron-studded doors and thick walls of red-ochred pine, still squat haphazardly along the banks of the river which runs through the town.

Porvoo has a curious atmosphere, half Tsarist Russia and half Scandinavian Welfare State. The houses, for instance, are of two kinds. The old ones are in 'Russian' style: long and low with triangular pediments and ornate window-frames. The new are the

'Swedish Matchbox' type: square and neat, they look exactly what they are—prefabricated. I never ceased to enjoy studying the contrast between the two. The windows of the old houses would be filled with lace curtains and potted geraniums, those of the new with 'contemporary' textiles and rubbery-looking plants and creepers. What of the interiors, I wondered? Mahogany and samovars and that peculiarly Russian smell of pine and carbolic in the one and bleached fragile furniture, woolly rugs and a smell of floor-polish and roasting coffee in the other? I confided my imaginings to my teacher friend. He laughed and said: "In some respects you are right, but the difference between the two is not *so* marked. After all we are Finns, not Russians or Swedes, although in the course of our history we have absorbed strong elements from both countries."

In fact Porvoo, like most places in southern Finland, has a large percentage of Swedish-speaking Finns. They have their own schools and they fill many vacancies in the Town Council. It is surprising how well these Swedo-Finns fit into the pattern of life in the country. The language problem, which at one time had caused trouble, lapsed into insignificance with the advent of war with the U.S.S.R. in 1939.

Most of the working population of the town are employed either in the large printing works of Walter Söderström or the merchant house of Eklöfs, which runs the local saw-mill, engineering works and sulphite pulp-mill. Eklöfs is a family concern, which since its foundation in the middle of the 19th century has played a leading part in the town's affairs. The firm operates its own private welfare state, taking great pains to provide its workers with medical services, recreation facilities and cheap accommodation. When one sees the amount of welfare work done by such firms in Finland one understands why state social services are comparatively unadvanced. The Finns are prepared to do an immense amount for each other. Be it a matter of time, money or energy they give willingly and generously to a worthy cause. Voluntary organizations flourish. One of the most interesting in Porvoo is the Workers' Institute, which holds free night-school classes in a variety of subjects ranging from modern languages to radio engineering. Attendance at these classes is high. Mental curiosity is inherent in the Finnish character. The proportion of well-educated people in the country is higher than in England. The Finns have a cosmopolitan outlook which is rare to find in so small a country. Newspapers and libraries are well subscribed to. Nearly every foreign author of repute is translated into Finnish. In addition there is a flourishing national literature. The extent of the country's reading public was demonstrated to me one evening in Porvoo. I had gone to see *The Forsyte Saga* at the local cinema. Normally performances there were well attended but not crowded. That particular night the place was absolutely packed out. I asked a Finn the reason for this. He looked at me in surprise. "Have you not read Galsworthy?" he asked.



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Apart from being a minor industrial centre, Porvoo is the market town for the surrounding rural area. Saturdays are market days. On these occasions the square in front of the Town Hall is packed with booths and stalls. Horse-drawn carts bring in the produce of the country: large cabbages to make that tastiest of Finnish dishes *kahli kairule*, mountains



All photographs by the autho

Ninety-seven per cent of Finland's population is Protestant, and Porvoo—one of the oldest cities and a centre of culture and trade—is the seat of a Lutheran bishopric. The magnificent 15th-century Gothic cathedral (above) *dominates the town from its hilltop position and blends harmoniously with the ancient buildings surrounding it. Narrow cobbled streets link the old part with the new*

The wooden warehouses that line the river in Porvoo date from the 18th century, but the city has been a centre of trade since 1300. Nowadays timber and the various derivative industries are its chief concern, though engineering, printing and ceramics also play an important part in the town's economy





Porvoo's coral-pink Town Hall was built in 1764 at a time when Swedish influence was predominant in Finland. In 1716 Peter the Great succeeded in wresting Finland from Sweden, but for nearly a century it was a battle-ground between the two Powers, and only in 1919 was the Finnish Republic born. Despite the efforts of Russia to impose its culture on Finland, the centuries-long allegiance to Sweden is reflected in the fact that almost half Porvoo's Council consists of Swedish-speaking Finns





Saturday is market day in Porvoo, and the square fills with stalls of fish and vegetables, clothing, fruit and bread, while peasants stream in from the country bringing their wares by cart. The banner above the stall (opposite) *reads "Viborg Rings", a form of bread-roll that has its origin in the capital of Finnish Karelia. This district was ceded to Russia after the war of 1939-1940 and again in 1944. It was won back in the interval and as a result many thousands of Karelians twice migrated westward.* (Above) *The dark-skinned gypsies lend a southern touch to the essentially northern scene*



The influence of Finland's neighbours in Porvoo is clearly marked in the style of its buildings. The girls' school, well equipped, airy and ultra-modern, closely resembles the Swedish type of architecture



These old timbered houses, with their ornate window-frames, are a striking reminder of the days when Finland was a Grand Duchy of Russia. Long and squat, they give an impression of cosiness and leisure



Logs being poled from Porvoo to the sulphite pulp-mills further downstream. Over two-thirds of Finland's total area is forested, and timber and wood-products are the country's main industrial resources

of potatoes and punnets of orange *chanterelle* mushrooms, which every Finn adores. There are fish-stalls loaded with barrels of *sill* (herrings soaked in brine) and bakers' stalls with loaves of thick rye bread and flower-stalls and clothing-stalls with an exclusive line in tartan shirts, leather jackets and American jeans. Best sight of all are the gypsies, who thread their way through the crowds, laughing with each other and extorting money from anyone who stops long enough to listen to their chatter. The women with their wide black velvet skirts and jangling gold ornaments provide a charming contradiction to the essentially Northern character of the scene.

Saturdays are not only market days; they are also sauna days. Nearly every family has its sauna house. Those that have not go to the public sauna, which on Saturday afternoon is packed with humanity sweating, scrubbing and beating itself into a fresh lease of life.

After the Saturday sauna the population of the town strolls in the parks and along the river walks. The young men congregate in the market square and eye the girls, who stand giggling in groups, and the older men cluster round the numerous kiosks and cafés to begin the task of drinking steadily through the evening. The Finns, like the Swedes, are a bibulous nation; but, when drunk, they have an infectious gaiety, which is more pleasing to encounter than the sadder mood of their Scandinavian neighbours.

Porvoo in the summer is a peaceful place. Many of the townspeople retire to the numerous islands which ring the coast in an almost unbroken girdle. Here they spend as much of the summer as they can in quiet and solitude. Even the poorest have some kind of shack or cottage in the country to go to. The islands are superb places for holidays. They are wild and unkempt retreats. Some are flat and sandy, others are rocky citadels of granite. All are luxuriant with vegetation, covered with clumps of spruce and pine and a matted undergrowth of heather and thyme. The exotic beauty of this archipelago is in fitting contrast to the landscape of the mainland which, with its repetitive pattern of rolling hills and forests of birch and pine, can be monotonous.

Autumn had already arrived when I left Porvoo. Originally I had planned to spend a day there; this somehow had spun itself into a month. Summer in Finland seemed to have a mesmeric effect on me. Light and air and quietness were the beauty of the days; and time seemed to stand still. With the



The quiet beauty of Porvoo attracts many artists and the town has long been a centre of culture

coming of the winter, however, the tempo of life changed. The lotus-eaters began to return from the country and the town radiated a more bustling, purposeful air. Mist rose from the river in the early morning and the long avenues of birch lining its banks dropped their rusty leaves into the swiftly flowing stream. The booths in the market-place, which throughout the summer had done a thriving trade in ice-cream and lemonade, now switched to selling hot-dogs and large cups of steaming coffee. In the parks the children swung more energetically on the swings to keep warm and shuffled happily home through the thick carpet of leaves which covered paths and gutters. The time had obviously come to leave. The winter, I was told, started badly with grey monotonous days muffled by snow and finished with a dazzling chiaroscuro of black and white and gold, with the sun blazing over the frozen landscape of blue-shadowed hills and trees etched in charcoal against a vivid sky. "Come back in the spring," said a friend as he showed me onto the Helsinki bus. "And then you will understand the music of Sibelius."

The Idea of Calais

by MICHAEL SWAN

On January 6, 1558, after more than two centuries of English occupation, Calais was retaken by the Duke of Guise. It continued, however, to hold a peculiar place in English history and in the imagination of English travellers, as here recounted by Michael Swan—himself a travel-writer of distinction. His latest book, The Marches of Eldorado, *is being published by Cape this month*

Some years ago I met an old English gentleman in Florence, still doing the cultural rounds with the enthusiasm he had first known in the early 1890s. He certainly combined membership of two of Sterne's categories of travellers in *A Sentimental Journey*—he was an Inquisitive Traveller and a Sentimental Traveller. At one point, as he talked about his early travels on the Continent, he showed his charming capacity for sentiment by telling me what a dear place in his heart Calais had always had. He delighted me by his Browningesque rhyming of Calais with "malice", and spoke not only of the beauty of the view across the wide sands towards the English spire of Notre-Dame but of what he called the "idea" of Calais. For him it was still the gateway to the sights and sounds that had given such pleasure to his long life; not niggers but angels began for him at Calais. I could share the idea with him—but with Dieppe replaced for Calais; for it was from the waiting train at Dieppe that I had my first glimpse of Abroad, fascinated that the gay accordion world of the port should be so easily viewable from the railway-siding. I have an affection for Dieppe, but it is the palest thing compared with the old gentleman's adoration of Calais. I suppose the speed of all communications today has destroyed the idea of any place being a gateway to a country or a continent, and finally the traditional English regard for Calais will be dead. So perhaps this month, the 400th anniversary of the recapture of the town from the English, is a good moment to look to it with warm commemorative eyes.

It was at Calais that, for the first time, England became a colonial power, and those eleven months of siege in 1346-7 show how determined we were to make Calais what it was later called, "the brightest jewel in the English crown". Cynics might see the whole enterprise as a minuscule symbol of British imperialism; Edward III realized the enormous advantage to England if she could control Calais as an entrepôt and dominate the Straits on either side, but the English pretext for the siege was that a nest of piracy could be no longer tolerated. Again, there was the brutal decision to humiliate and execute the six burghers, which was followed by the usual English act of leniency —I am pleased that most authorities do not accept Froissart's tale that the leniency only came because of the pleadings of Edward's French Queen. The English merchants who displaced such a large proportion of the French population followed the military success with the expected English economic flair, and became so arrogantly certain of the permanence of the colony that they inscribed above the main gate the lines:

> Then shall the Frenchman Calais win,
> When iron and lead like cork shall swim.

Not only did the town become of enormous economic importance to England but it was used as a spearhead for aggression. After 211 years of occupation, and only a year before the Duke of Guise recaptured it, an Italian diplomat spoke of Calais thus in a letter to the Doge of Venice: "This frontier port and fortress is the key and principal entrance to the British dominions, without which the English would have no outlet from their own, nor access to other countries . . . so much so that if they were deprived of it they would not only be shut out from the Continent, but also from the commerce and intercourse of the world."

And so the bright jewel was plucked from the crown of England and Mary Tudor could say: "When I am dead and opened, you shall find 'Calais' lying in my heart." (This is Holinshed's original version of her words.)

Calais meant less to France than she did to England. The wars at the end of the 17th century finally ruined her commerce, and during the 18th century Calais seems to have been no more than a little fortified town whose trade had languished, eking out an existence on the production of lace and the trade of English travellers, who were obliged to stay a few days here, usually at the Hôtel



By courtesy of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lambeth Palace Library Trustees

The Burghers of Calais surrendering to Edward III on August 3, 1347, after a siege lasting nearly a year: a folio from the St Alban's Chronicle, a 15th-century manuscript, now at Lambeth Palace, which, written in English and illustrated by a Fleming, recounts stories of the Kings of England

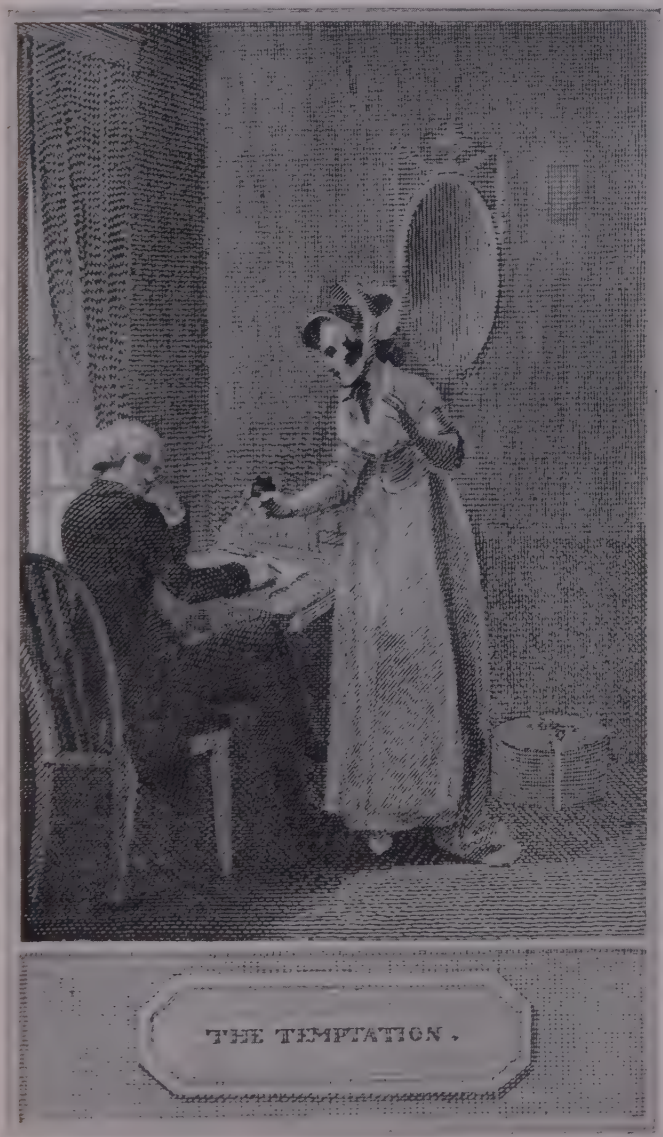
d'Angleterre, while they made arrangements for their further travel across France. It was, you may remember, the excellent fricassee'd chicken of Monsieur Dessein, the proprietor of the hotel, that made Sterne exclaim that they ordered such matters better in France; proving, as he put it, that he was incontestably in France. The euphoria of the exclamation marks the usual Englishman's sense of release as he stepped from the Calais packet. Would Sterne, I wonder, have behaved in England just as he did when he took the charming and unknown lady's hand in the carriage at Calais: "The pulsations of the arteries along my fingers pressing across hers, told her what was passing within me."

The popularity of Sterne's book must have strengthened the English traveller's interest in Calais. Certainly the remarks about Monsieur Dessein and his fricassee made his fortune for him. When an Englishman asked him about Sterne years later he said: "He make moche money by his Journey of Sentiment, but I make more by means of that than he by all his *ouvrages réunis. Qu'en pensez-vous?*" It is sad to see, a century later, that Augustus Hare describes the Hôtel Dessein as "indifferent".

Although Sterne was satisfied that he was really on French soil in Calais the town still had vestiges of its English occupation. The English colonizers did not return to their home country after the reoccupation. Many must have gradually lost their allegiance to

England and become to all intents and purposes French, but a proportion, aided by the coherence of the colony, kept their names and nationality. As late as 1905, according to Baedeker, there were 1500 Englishmen living in Calais, most of them engaged in the lace trade. There was a small section of this colony who practised no trade at all, and who fall under Sterne's heading of Travellers of Necessity; men who waited patiently at Dessein's until a London scandal was subdued, until the simple life at Calais had recouped their fortunes enough for them to pay their debts. This last was the most common class of all, and for thirteen years Beau Brummell was its most prominent member. Before his fall he had salted away enough money for his years at Calais to be comfortable enough. He had rooms at Leleux's, the bookseller in the then rue Royale, which he furnished well in Louis Quatorze style. His dinners were sent over by Dessein. His dress had lost only a little of its old elegance, and each day, after he had read the *Morning Post*, he would take two hours to dress. A walk in the Place followed, and the remainder of the day was spent alone in his lodgings. A book written some time after his death says: "Occasionally he dined at Colonel Patterson's table; but of aught bearing reference to the boon of society, or gaiety, the broken Beau was utterly and irretrievably bereft."

An incident in A Sentimental Journey *which perfectly exemplifies the general rise of temperature stimulated by travel (beginning at Calais) in the Sentimental Traveller's breast: the fair chambermaid offers the reverend gentleman an inkpot as he sits at his desk in the hotel*



There were other instances of the opposite of Sterne's euphoria. In January 1815 Emma Hamilton died in Calais at the reputed age of 51, in a dreary house in the rue Française. She was buried in a timber-yard just outside the fortifications; the pall on her rough coffin was her black silk petticoat stitched onto a white curtain, and a half-pay Irish dragoon performed the rites. She had come to Calais, like Brummell, to escape her creditors in England. A city alderman had paid enough of her debts for her to be released from the King's Bench Prison, but when her coach-maker threatened her with another arrest she had taken the Calais packet. Before she died she depended for her actual food on the charity of a member of the English colony, who would send bread round to her each day.

The accounts of the Inquisitive Travellers in Calais make pleasanter reading. Ruskin expresses the sense of release which this class of traveller had on reaching



(Above) *Calais from the sea, about 1830. On the skyline can be seen (left to right) the church of Notre-Dame, built during the English occupation; the Tour du Guet, a watch-tower and lighthouse; and the belfry of the old Hôtel de Ville. The last two appear* (below) *in a view of the Place d'Armes. Near the Hôtel de Ville was the Hôtel Dessein which Sterne made famous in* A Sentimental Journey





Hulton Picture Library

Among the best-known "Travellers of Necessity" (to use one of Laurence Sterne's categories) was Emma, Lady Hamilton, who spent the last unhappy months of her extravagant life in Calais, whither she fled from her creditors in 1814. In her youth she was painted by most of the leading artists of the day, but the unkind cartoon caught up with her at last: a caricature by James Gillray, about 1807, entitled "Dido in Despair"

French soil. "I cannot find words to express", he says in *Modern Painters*, "the intense pleasure I have always in finding myself, after some prolonged stay in England, at the foot of the old tower of Calais church." This was the church of Notre-Dame, a building, indeed, of a kind which Ruskin could not have felt was particularly French. It was built during the English occupation and its style is very English. It was its state of decay which satisfied the young Ruskin's romanticism. He talks of its "stern wasteness and gloom, eaten away by the Channel winds, and overgrown with the bitter sea-grasses". It was a romanticism shared by Matthew Arnold, whose imagination was caught by the broad sands to the east of the harbour:

A thousand knights have reined
their steeds
To watch the line of sand-hills
run
Along the never-silent strait
To Calais glittering in the
sun;
To look towards Ardres' Golden
Field
Across this wide aërial plain,
Which glows as if the middle-age
Were gorgeous upon earth again.

The approach to modern Calais would not, I think, allow even the most imaginative poet of today to conjure up the past with such ease. As I suggested at the beginning of this article air-travel has done much to destroy the idea of Calais as a point of release, and arrival in a new world. It is no longer romantic. It is the town from which the Germans in the last war bombarded Dover with heavy artillery; it is the town in which the British, in 1940, were besieged by the Germans, just as the English had laid siege to the town in 1346.

The fate of the Rifle Brigade, the Queen Victoria Rifles and the battalion of the Royal Tank Regiment, who were in Calais in 1940, was decided on the day Mr Churchill told his Chiefs of Staff that Calais was to be held. In *Their Finest Hour* he writes: "I now resolved that Calais should be fought to the death, and that no evacuation by sea could be allowed the garrison."

A regiment of tanks was boxed in Calais, because they were unable to face the guns on the outskirts of the town. Churchill believed that Lord Gort should attack the guns in order to relieve Calais. He was furious that no such attack had been attempted. "The eyes of the Empire are upon the defence of Calais", he said in a telegram at the time. The final decision not to relieve the garrison was taken with a full sense of what it would mean to the beleaguered regiments. "One has to eat and drink in war," Churchill wrote, "but I could not help feeling physically sick as we afterwards sat silent at the table."

Another such traveller was George Bryan Brummell whose flight to Calais took place two years later. As Beau Brummell he was a leader of fashion and friend of the Prince Regent; but necessity and his gambling debts drove him across the Channel

Hulton Picture Library





Imperial War Museum

The Prince of Wales on the quayside at Calais after the departure of King George V on August 15, 1916. During both the 20th-century World Wars Calais, through which so many thousands of British soldiers had passed to foreign fields in earlier centuries, again took on a special significance

The holding of Calais was a necessary part of the plan for the evacuation of the B.E.F. In a message to Brigadier Nicholson, in command at Calais, Churchill said: "Every hour you continue to exist is of the greatest help to the B.E.F. Government has therefore decided you must continue to fight. Have greatest possible admiration for your splendid stand. Evacuation will not (*repeat* not) take place, and craft required for above purpose are to return to Dover."

The garrison was pounded by the Germans and their losses were heavy. But Calais was the crux, and the three days which were gained by this magnificent stand made Dunkirk possible.

It is this part of the history of Calais which remains most in my mind; but it was a tragedy which had left no mark on the mind of the old gentleman whom I met in Florence. For him it was still the town of Dessein's hotel, of interesting streets with names translated from the English, the focal point from which roads led to all the glories of the Continent. It struck me as touching that he —an *Inglese italianizzato* if ever there were one—should have Calais so engraved on his heart.

One day, I feel, I must go to Calais, must see Rodin's monument to the burghers in the Jardin Richelieu, go to see whether the bitter sea-grasses have invaded Notre-Dame once more, and make a pious visit to the timber-yard where Emma Hamilton was buried. And eat a fricassee'd chicken at Dessein's.

Roman Syria

by ELIZABETH THOMSON

An article in our June 1957 number described the ruins of Baalbek, that Roman wonder on a Phoenician site. Baalbek, however, needs to be perceived in its historic setting, the rich and flourishing Roman Province of Syria. This is brought to life in relation to the modern scene by the author, whose husband was until recently Oriental Secretary at the British Embassy in Damascus

THE ghosts of ancient Rome move only fitfully through the city of Saint Peter. But in the Roman Province of Syria, the ruts from Roman chariot-wheels are still fresh in shopping-streets where no-one has bought and sold since the Arab invasion. Theatres and baths remain almost ready to serve their patrons, disturbed now only by goats or an occasional child looking for old coins. If you turn off the desert road between Damascus and Palmyra, you come upon a mountain of admirable masonry joining two barren ridges —a Roman dam wide enough for two cars to drive across abreast. Bumping along the deplorable tarmac near the Turkish-Syrian border on the way from Aleppo to Antioch, you cross a stretch of Roman road, its paving as firm and its kerb-stones as square as they were 1700 years ago. An aqueduct wandering through the fields outside Alexandretta brought Roman Syrians water from the mountains, where today it is laboriously bottled and carried down for drinking. In the Ghab marshes of north Syria, the major post-war irrigation scheme consists mainly of widening a Roman drainage-channel. A dilapidated inn and a small mill stand by the waterfalls at Daphne, where once the sacred shrines of Apollo inspired a forty-five days' festival each year and summer villas sported the gay mosaics that now decorate the sleepy museum at Antioch.

The ghosts who haunt these substantial monuments have no competitors to emulate or outshine them. The energy and efficiency of Rome has remained unchallenged. Moving never faster than their horses could gallop, untouched by the strange modern economics of oil, the population of Roman Syria was nevertheless larger and more prosperous than it is today. Yet there seems to be no overwhelming reason—such as a significant decrease in rainfall—why this ancient prosperity should not be restored, with oil-revenue as pure bonus.

True, the Romans had several centuries to perfect the public works which, as mandated territories and as newly independent nations, the Arab countries have been trying to reconstruct in a generation and a half. True, the Romans had none of the conflicting claims of nationalism to contend with, like those which paralyse the progress of a plan for the use of the Jordan waters today. Their governors were not plagued by publicity that gives an unreal weight to the clamours of every ambitious faction. The natural resources of the land had not yet been despoiled —the hills stripped of trees and swept barren of soil—by centuries of exploitation. The Romans also inherited in Syria the roads and cities already developed by their Greek predecessors, the Seleucid heirs of Alexander. And, pagan or Christian, the pious among them sought to render to Heaven and to Rome an account of positive achievement, instead of being protected from responsibility by the fatalism of Islam.

Granting all these advantages, the modern traveller still gasps at the thoroughness, the technical skill and—always—the energetic efficiency of these ancient empire-builders. What, one wonders, might they have done with the internal-combustion engine to serve them? But this speculation is a contradiction in terms among the solid amenities of the Roman caravan-roads or the massive columns of their temples.

After Pompey annexed Syria in 64 B.C., Rome decided to try an experiment in peaceful coexistence with the two frontier enemies, Parthia to the north-east and the nomad tribes to the south. For a century and a half, therefore, local rulers like the family of Herod in Judea, the merchant Nabataeans of Petra, the rich cities of the Decapolis in southern Syria, and the caravan kingdom of Palmyra were encouraged to act as buffer-states. These all throve as tax-paying allies of Rome, defending the desert roads and reaping the rewards of a brisk luxury-trade between Rome and the East.

Well-planned towns like Jerash (the ancient Gerasa) are the monuments of this era. For all their homage to local gods and their adherence to established tongues and cus-



Sir John Gardener

After Pompey's conquest of Syria in 64 B.C. *there began for it an era of prosperity which has been unequalled since. The basis of that prosperity was good communications.* (Above) *A Roman bridge at Cyrrhus, north-east of Antioch; and* (below) *part of the Roman road between Antioch and Aleppo. Its surface has survived a great deal better than the modern tarmac of World War II alongside it*

From the author





Elizabeth Thomson

The Roman dam at El Harbaka, sixty feet high and over 200 yards long, provided water and hence food for a frontier-post protecting four caravan routes (three, which were used at different seasons, between Damascus and Palmyra and one from Homs southwards). Its immense scale can be judged by the man on its wall. It has been disused for centuries; there is now only one farm in its neighbourhood





Roman Syria comprised the present Syria, Israel, Lebanon and parts of Jordan and Turkey. Jerash, now in Jordan, was a rich trading-centre and one of the self-governing cities of the Decapolis—a confederacy set up soon after 64 B.C. *as protection against Jewish anarchy and bedouin raids. It was wholly rebuilt by the Romans in the 1st century* A.D. *on the typical rectangular plan with two main intersecting streets.* (Opposite, top) *The ruined Forum from one of the town's two theatres.* (Opposite, bottom) *The main street, which was widened in the 2nd century, still shows the wheel-marks of chariots. It leads from the Forum to* (right) *the Temple of Artemis.* (Below) *A family of Arabs, from the modern village, harvesting onions outside the walls of ancient Jerash*



Elizabeth Thomson

Sir John Gard





British Museum

A glass beaker made in Sidon (and signed with the maker's name, Ennion) during the first half of the 1st century A.D. *It is representative of the sumptuous wares produced in Syria for the delight of a highly civilized and luxury-loving Roman world*

toms, these urban centres of prosperity grew in flattering emulation of the Roman model: straight, colonnaded streets, dignified forum, baths, temples and theatres; and above all a scrupulous attention to drainage and water-supply. Jerash, whose business-tongue was Greek, supported two theatres. Today, these still provide from the top tiers a lovely view across the rolling hills that surround and protect the town. The well-equipped stage of one of them has been skilfully reconstructed by British archaeologists. But the only drama we found near the theatres of Jerash was the excitement of an entire family ploughing onions in a field beneath the wall of the north theatre, their wooden plough and bullocks somehow infinitely older than the neat Corinthian columns they passed so uncuriously.

The trade-route through Syria from southern Arabia was busiest at the beginning of the Roman era. It brought Indian luxuries and the incense of Arabia Felix from the Yemen, by way of Mecca, to Petra and the cities of the Decapolis, and thence to the Mediterranean ports. On a typical trip, this cargo had to pass some sixty-five stations, each of which required dues in return for protection against the raiding bedouin, before it reached settled territory. Even so, merchants often made 100 per cent profit between Mecca and southern Syria, and 50 per cent interest on loans to finance the caravans was usual.

Gradually the bulk of trade moved north to the shorter route from India by way of the Persian Gulf, as the mounted archers of Palmyra were profitably encouraged by Rome to protect the travellers. The caravan road from Palmyra to Hit on the Euphrates is still known by the bedouin as *darb el Kufri*, "road of the Unbelievers", because of its Roman origin. India's exports to the West over the short caravan-route came to 1,500,000 sesterces a year, with a retail value of 150,000,000, causing a considerable drain on Roman gold. (Augustus had been able to run the Empire on 600,000,000 sesterces per year.) "So much", remarked Pliny wryly, "do we waste on luxury and women."

While Palmyra, Homs and Aleppo were usurping some of the southern merchants' prosperity, the more enterprising of them promoted local Syrian products. The groaning board of the Roman epicure held olives and fruit preserves from Damascus, figs and dates from Jericho, truffles from Jerusalem, onions from Ascalon, and wine from the vineyards around Latakia. While Chinese silks for the women of Rome were travelling through Palmyra—traces of some have recently been found there—all self-respecting Roman senators dressed in robes of purple wool from Tyre and used glassware from Sidon. Strabo notes that as a result of Tyre's murex dye industry "the city grew rich while becoming a most unpleasant place to live in". Syrian glass has even been found on the Rhine and in southern Russia.

Syrian merchants meanwhile made their

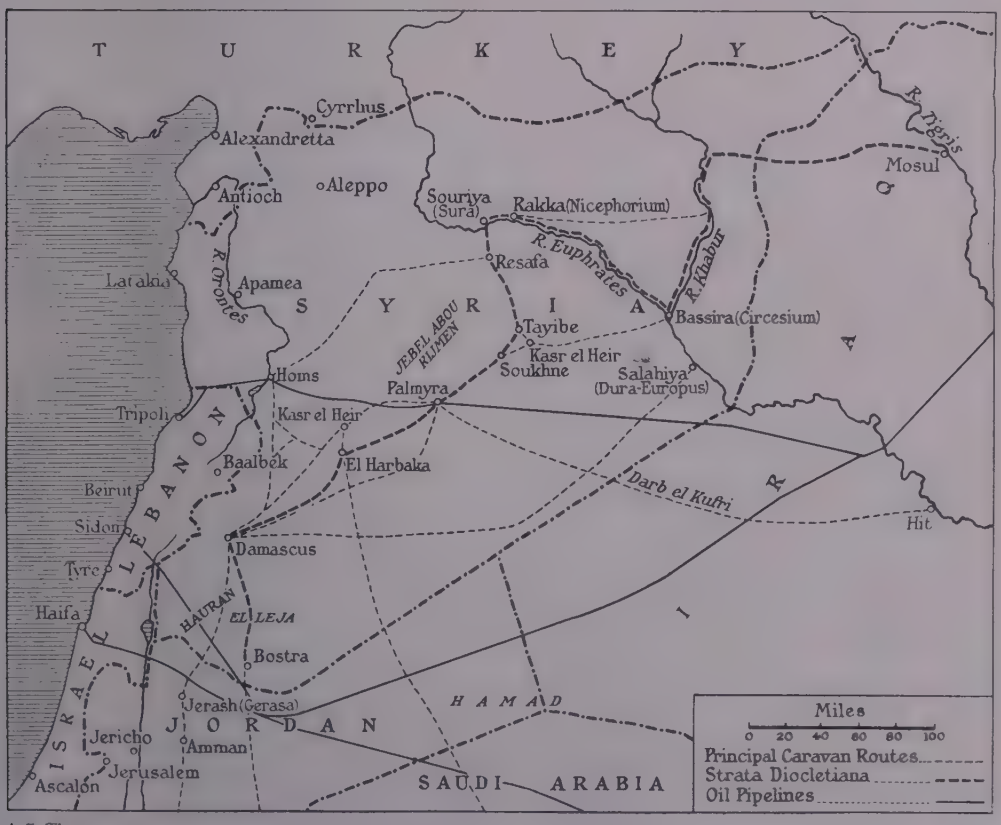
way westwards in such numbers that Juvenal, at the turn of the 1st century, complained that the Orontes had flowed into the Tiber. There were comparatively few Italian civilian immigrants into Syria, however: competition was too sharp and obstructive. The pattern is not unfamiliar.

But Roman administrators, engineering companies and soldiers did come. Even during the 1st century, the local dynasties and city-states were being absorbed gradually into the Imperial military and judicial system. The famous Palmyrene archers are pictured following Trajan into Dacia on the column that commemorated his victory north of the Danube in A.D. 107; and grants of farm-land in Syria were prized by retiring army veterans, both Italian and provincial. Before the inflation of the 3rd century a man could live on about 150 Syrian denarii a year. He could earn one denarius a day working in a vineyard, and his loaf of bread cost him less than a tenth of that.

Antioch, the capital of the Roman Province, had a population as large as the combined populations of Damascus, Aleppo and Beirut today. Now there are eight cities in the area with a population of over 20,000; there were twice as many such cities in Roman Syria. Apamea housed half a million souls, where now there are only deserted ruins. T. E. Lawrence counted 120 deserted towns within a twenty-mile radius of modern Aleppo. And in the rich Hauran plateau south of Damascus there still stand solid basalt houses for many more families than live there today.

The units of rural taxation also suggest larger holdings and far more land under cultivation than at present. Twenty, forty or sixty acres of ploughed land, depending on its fertility, and five acres of vineyards or 225 olive-trees were the basic taxable units under Diocletian, any of which is untypical wealth today.

It was under the thorough organization of Diocletian (A.D. 284-305) that Syria began for the first time to find Imperial taxation a burden. But the Strata Diocletiana, the fortified frontier that Diocletian built from Bostra to the Tigris against a rejuvenated Persian Empire, is probably the best example



A. J. Thornton



Situated in an oasis 150 miles north-east of Damascus, Palmyra was the geographical centre of the Roman caravan traffic, the point at which the routes from the coastal cities met before the final desert-crossing to the Euphrates and Tigris. It grew rich on this traffic and the duties levied on goods from Persia, India and China. But its period of glory was brief, for the Palmyrene princes, whose aid the Romans enlisted to defend the frontier, overreached themselves and Aurelian destroyed it in A.D. *272.* (Opposite, top) *The theatre.* (Opposite, bottom) *The market-place at the cross-roads in the centre of the town.* (Below) *The Temple of Bel dominates Palmyra. It occupies a court over 200 yards square*

Sir Tobie Gardiner





Sir John Gardener

Resafa was a big fortified outpost made habitable by Roman wells and cisterns. It rose to great fame under Byzantium following the martyrdom there of Sergius, a commander of the Imperial Palace Guard, in A.D. *305. After his death it was renamed Sergiopolis and became a centre of pilgrimage.* (Above) *The Byzantine church of St Sergius.* (Below) *Arabs gathering green-stuff by the outer walls*

Elizabeth Thomson



of all of Rome's peerless development of Syrian resources. This frontier was traced, largely by aeroplane, during the 1930s, from Bostra through the incredible volcanic wilderness of the Leja to Damascus, thence to Palmyra, north to the Euphrates, and finally east to the Tigris. Its careful arrangements for the efficiency of the garrisons that protected the Province from invasion and for the comfort of the caravans that travelled the desert roads make the pipeline builders of today look like conjurers with only precarious hold on life in the desert. Apart from the military or commercial interest of the archaeologists' reconstructions along the frontier, one is constantly amazed at the skill with which the Roman engineers made this barren land support not only large garrisons but permanent towns, where now the bedouin pursue a hard subsistence as they did in the days of Abraham and the men of the pipeline-stations live their insulated lives among imported generators and refrigerated food.

We followed this Roman frontier from Damascus to the Euphrates one spring week-end. The modern track bumps along the central of three Roman caravan-routes from Damascus to Palmyra. Our first stop was at the western Kasr el Heir, where the main east-west routes pass close together and the best north-south route from Homs through the Hamad crossed as well. Special provision for the caravans' water-supply and for that of a permanent garrison was evidently necessary. Nevertheless we found it hard to believe our eyes when, in the eery light that follows a sandstorm, we plunged between a barren rock-ridge and a jungle of weirdly-channelled silt, to find a dam so large that our two motor-cars looked like beetles parked together on top of it.

The dam at El Harbaka joins the rock-ridges that form the Wadi el Kebir. Its solid masonry is sixty feet wide at the base, twenty feet wide on top, nearly sixty feet high, and well over 200 yards long. The reservoir behind it could hold 140,000 cubic metres of water against the summer drought, and must have done so regularly, for an overflow-channel is provided in addition to the outlet-gate at the bottom of the dam. Except for some facing-stones that have been taken out near the bottom, the dam stands as strong as ever. One patch of bright green grass at the foot

The ruins of two neighbouring castles at the eastern Kasr el Heir; they stand isolated near the desert route between Palmyra and Circesium. The bigger castle was built as a hunting-lodge by the Ummayad Calif Hisham in A.D. *728; both stand on the site of Roman forts. Kasr el Heir supported a large community, for adjacent walls enclosed a vast garden, watered by long irrigation-channels*

Elizabeth Thomson





By courtesy of the Iraq Petroleum Co., Ltd

(Above) *The desert outpost of today: a pump-station on the Iraq Petroleum Company's oil pipeline, the modern counterpart of the caravan route from Palmyra to the Euphrates.* (Below) *An employee of the oil company at home with his wife on the station, where several hundreds live a comfortable if isolated life*

By courtesy of the Iraq Petroleum Co., Ltd





Elizabeth Thomson

A bedouin migration between Palmyra and Kasr el Heir. As in Roman times and long before, the bedouin traverse the desert in search of grazing for their camels and flocks. The Roman aim was peaceful coexistence with two enemies: Parthia to the north-east and bedouin raiders to the south

of the dam and three glinting blue swallows darting among the silt-towers that the wadi has built during the centuries of the dam's disuse were the only signs of life.

Were the bare hills covered with trees when the Romans built here? How many acres of grain and vines grew to feed the garrisons? Aerial photographs show that at least 500,000 square metres were irrigated by water from this reservoir in the walled gardens behind the castella at Kasr el Heir. Equally elaborate reservoirs served the post at Han Mankoura, which now lies abandoned to the south of the modern track; and a combination of reservoirs and deep wells supplied the desert posts on the last stages of the way to Palmyra.

Two miles south of the dam, we stopped to visit a cultivated and worldly sheikh, the younger brother of the chief of the powerful Rualla bedouin tribe. In his tidy new mud-brick house, furnished with incongruous finery from Damascus, we were swept into the full, gratifying ritual of bedouin hospitality. After the sheikhly meal of fresh-killed lamb and rice, the talk wandered, as always it has over coffee around bedouin camp-fires, from poetry to politics and back. But incongruity appeared also in the conversation: the sheikh boasted gaily to us at intervals about his new orchards, about his grain sprouting incredibly green on the edge of the wadi, about his plans for some cotton. And Roman engineers were responsible for this, too. Our sheikh had built the house of his hobbies beside the Roman well at Ain Bardé, which had served a post on the Strata Diocletiana itself. There lay the well at the front of the house, lined square and solid with Roman masonry, and full of clear water enough to delight the hearts of many dusty caravans.

Palmyra was this time not the goal of an expedition but, for us, only a stage. We were preoccupied with the forty miles of deserted and spine-shattering road we had travelled from Kasr el Heir. Fifty years ago we would have ridden, as Gertrude Bell did, in constant fear of bedouin raiders and anxious about our next supply of water. In the 3rd century A.D. we could have travelled securely past three major garrisoned posts, each in constant visual communication with those on either side of it and with the line of posts on the southern route to warn the resident

cavalry of any danger approaching us from the desert. We would have passed wells spaced for the easy convenience of our horses and pack-animals. And the surface of the road would have been tended with care, marked all the way by even kerbs and encouraging milestones, paved in the low places that might get marshy during the rainy season and cleared of boulders over the firm clay of the high ground.

Our chief business in Palmyra was to find a representative of the modern Syrian garrison in order to show him our permit to proceed northward. This region, innocent of any fortification later than the 16th century, was rather arbitrarily called a "military area"; it has since been closed to all Western travellers. But police headquarters in modern Palmyra's dusty main street was deserted. We finally found the officers spending the hour before sunset sensibly, if not symbolically, in the Roman bath on the far edge of the ancient town!

The country north of Palmyra is beautiful. The route runs to the east of the spectacular cliffs of the Jebel Abou Rijmen; it is here that Père Poidebard, whose definitive description of the Roman frontier in his book *La Trace de Rome dans le désert de Syrie* rarely departs from the archaeologist's brisk catalogue of details, allows himself a more leisurely reflection:

> The Roman engineers knew that the most trying hardship for the caravan travellers was not to know where they were going or how far they had travelled between stopping-places. Next to that was the sheer monotony of the trek. When one follows out the ancient Roman camel-tracks, it is astonishing to see how they use the boldest and often most scenic routes. One feels the presence of a great Western civilization which had time to cultivate the practical arts in the course of travel.

Along this leg of the frontier, one is aware more of the flexibility of Roman planning than of the regularity that marks the stages of the route between Damascus and Palmyra. The range of cliffs runs between two quite dissimilar lines of defence, permanent posts to the north-west of it and a system of mobile cavalry, watch-towers and fortified wells to the south-east. Parthian and Sassanid horses were not trained to jump: therefore simple walls around the strategic wells could check a raiding attack. Bedouin cavalry were encouraged, by 'salaries' paid to their chiefs and by reservoirs sensibly sited in this now-barren country for the use of their flocks, to defend the outer wells. They made raiding-parties turn back for lack of water and alerted the permanent garrisons to the north-west of any more serious invasion.

Of the garrison towns, Soukhne, Tayibe, and El Koum are dusty, fly-bitten survivals, and the eastern Kasr el Heir and Resafa are magnificent ruins, deserted except for the bedouin who stop during their migration westward to water their animals at the old wells and to gather greens in the shadow of the massive Byzantine and Arab walls that cover the old Roman forts. But the enormous, beautifully vaulted cisterns at Resafa, which was the Byzantine cathedral city of St Sergius, are as impressive in scale as the dam at El Harbaka.

Diocletian's double line of defence kept the caravan-routes safe for their valuable loads well into the 7th century. By then, however, the ancient rivalry between Persia and the Eastern Roman Empire had so exhausted both combatants that the Arab invasion could sweep north over the Province of Syria almost without resistance. For a while, the Ummayad princes maintained the Roman facilities and even enlarged some of the old posts—the two garden-palaces still known as Kasr el Heir, for instance—into favoured royal hunting-lodges. But trade between East and West slowed to a standstill. Gradually the dams and reservoirs fell into disrepair, the wells filled in. Erased by wind and sand, the Roman frontier lost its meaning and Syria its prosperity.

Our road — and Diocletian's — bumped along from Resafa to the Euphrates over a deserted plateau of limestone and shifting sand. Crossing the Euphrates to Rakka—Alexander's city of Nicephorium—there suddenly stretched a steel bridge which must be the first engineering work undertaken on that route since Resafa's walls crumbled. A rather pompous inscription announces, in English, that the bridge was built in record time by British engineers during World War II.

That inscription, or equally the verse to the Syrian goddess of Hierapolis that was found near Hadrian's wall in the north of England, invites easy platitudes about the peculiar by-products of war. But wells and dams and reservoirs and solid roads, those products of the Roman peace, are the backbone of Syrian wealth today as they were 1800 years ago. Oil pipelines may have replaced caravans full of Chinese silks and Indian spices in the country's politics and high finance; but the people who live on the land can still learn much from the engineers of ancient Rome.